

Breaking Down the **BARRIERS**

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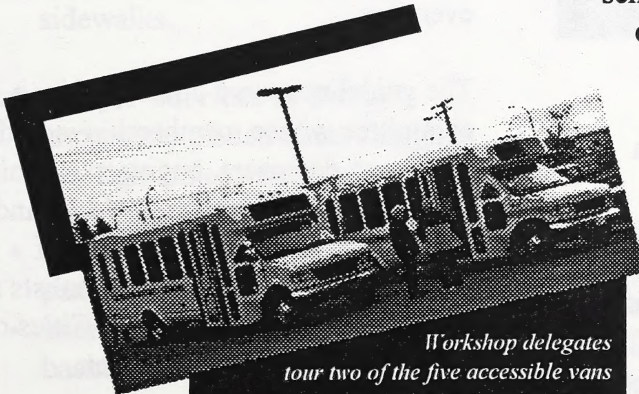
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FROM THE EDITOR

The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) sponsored a workshop on October 20 in Red Deer for large towns and small cities. In this issue, we'll tell you a bit about the workshop as well as describe an accessible transportation training program initiated by a community-based group in Sherwood Park. You'll also read about the development of guidelines to assist communities across Alberta in creating safe, accessible areas for people to walk and travel in.

If you have any information or story ideas relating to transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities, call us at 427-7674.



*Workshop delegates
tour two of the five accessible vans
on display at Red Deer.*

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION SERVICE WORKSHOP FOR SMALL CITIES/LARGE TOWNS A SUCCESS!

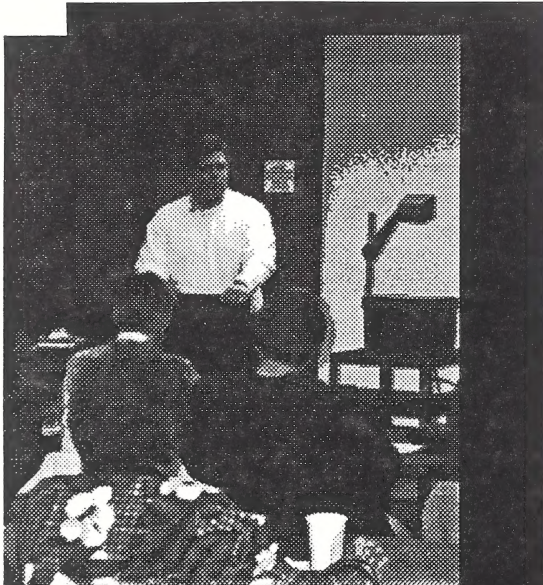
On a sunny Friday in late October more than 60 people gathered in a room in the Provincial Building in Red Deer. They were attending a day-long workshop on accessible transportation. The workshop was sponsored by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) with assistance from Alberta Transportation and Utilities.

Nearly everyone in the room represented an agency or group in a small community providing transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities. They came from 33 different communities and travelled from as far away as Hinton, Cochrane and Stettler.

The delegates travelled to Red Deer because they wanted information on accessible transportation -- and they wanted, perhaps more importantly, to meet other people doing the same kind of job they were doing.

The workshop's agenda included providing the delegates with:

- updates on two provincial initiatives on accessible transportation,
- an opportunity to tour five accessible vans and two accessible coaches, -- and
- an opportunity for three of the delegates to share their success stories with others.



Workshop delegates listen as John MacLean, Barrhead describes Barrhead Accessible Taxi Project.

Congratulations go to CUTA for sponsoring the workshop, to Birgitta Larsson for doing a great job of organizing it, -- and to the transportation companies who gave freely of their time and equipment: Greyhound, Diversified Transport, and Crestline Ambu-Craft!

CREATING SAFE, ACCESSIBLE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENTS

Many communities across the province are either revitalizing or thinking about revitalizing their downtown shopping areas. Improvements to the downtown/shopping areas often include constructing new sidewalks, putting in park benches, planting trees or shrubs and replacing utilitarian lighting standards with decorative lamp posts.

These improvements usually dramatically alter the looks of a community's commercial area. And often achieve the town's or city's objective which is to have more people walking on foot, shopping and visiting in their downtown area. However, sometimes these improvements are constructed without due consideration of the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Alberta Transportation and Utilities has developed guidelines to help ensure these new revitalized spaces are accessible to everyone.

The guidelines were developed by a committee whose membership included landscape designers, engineers, architects, representatives from the C.N.I.B. and the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, specialists at AT&U, and employees of the Cities of Calgary, Leduc, and Edmonton.

The guidelines have been approved by the Advisory Committee on Barrier Free Transportation. They will be distributed to every town and city in the province as well as the various provincial associations of design professionals.

The three main areas of content included in the document are:

Seven principles of good design

- allowing for a clear path of travel, free of obstructions.
- providing a firm, even, non-slip, glare-free surface.
- ensuring gradients are gradual and landings are big enough.
- providing a wide enough path to suit the intended traffic.
- standardizing the size of ramps and locating them away from drainage structures.
- providing tactile clues for the vision impaired and audible crosswalk signals where warranted at intersections.
- standardizing ramp grades where driveways or alleyways cross sidewalks.

Some major barriers to travel

- improperly placed street furniture (eg. light poles, signs, bike racks, etc.).
- use of paving stones or bricks in pedestrian areas.
- improperly placed grates and catch basins.



Some design solutions to the two major barriers

- considerations when placing street furniture.
- specifications that minimize the amount of frost heave and cracks in sidewalks.
- recommendations when using paving stones.

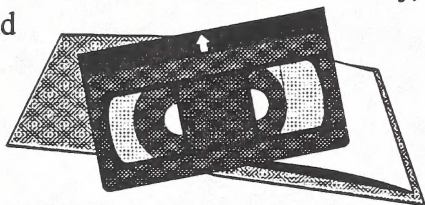
If you're interested in getting a copy of the Guidelines for Design of Safe Accessible Pedestrian Environments, contact Bob Rebus at Alberta Transportation and Utilities in Edmonton at 427-4575.

EDMONTON TRANSIT'S "MOBILITY CHOICES" PROGRAM UP AND OPERATING

The July/August issue of *Breaking Down the Barriers* featured an article on "Mobility Choices", an educational program developed by Edmonton Transit to help people learn about the different options for accessible transportation.

A "travel training package" has been developed for agencies that includes :

- a video to show clients the variety of transportation services and assistance available in the city, and



- a workbook with ideas/exercises on how to teach travel training.

As well, Edmonton Transit will make a low-floor bus available to schools and agencies so clients can experience first-hand how to get on and off the bus.

If you or your group is interested in getting more information about "Mobility Choices", call Margaret Dushinski in Edmonton at 496-5788.

Did you know?

Most local organizations providing accessible transportation relied mainly, if not entirely, on grants, donations and fund-raising to cover their operating costs.

Source: AT&U survey of Transportation for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities in Alberta, May 1995.

ROBIN HOOD ASSOCIATION INSTITUTES MOBILITY TRAINING PROGRAM

Just east of Edmonton, in the community of Sherwood Park, is a community-based agency run by the Robin Hood Association for the Handicapped. The Robin Hood Association serves both adults and children with mental and physical disabilities. In 1993, when transportation funding provided by the government was cut in an effort to reduce expenditures, many of the individuals needed to start using public transportation, unaccompanied, for the first time.

Two of the Client Service Managers at the school, Darlene Gmeinweser and Joan Winch, decided to create a mobility training program. They created an individualized training plan for each client based on the person's needs and skill levels. Part of the process involved drawing up charts detailing every step the

client would have to take to get from Place A to Place B (eg. Walk to intersection, watch for cars as you walk through parking lot.), obtaining authorization/consent slips from parents or guardians, and establishing ways to monitor the clients ongoing progress to the stated goal.

Of course not everything has gone smoothly all the time. There have been a few bumps along the road. Some of the clients have found it difficult to deal with harassment they get from other students in the area. And there have been occasions when clients have gotten lost or missed their bus. But, nothing irreversible has occurred, and the program, by and large, is a tremendous success.

Currently, 35 adults served by Robin Hood use the public transit in Sherwood Park and Edmonton. They use it to go to school, work, home, and for recreational pursuits. Being able to use public transit on their own has increased these adult's self-confidence -- and feelings of independence.

Darlene Gmeinwieser and Joan Winch talked about their experiences at the CUTA workshop for Small City/Large Town Accessible Services. If your group is interested in learning from their experiences -- or can see a different way to apply what they've done for your own needs, contact them at 464-1050.

PILOT PROJECT FOR LRV RAMPS A GO!

It is often difficult for someone in a wheelchair or scooter to board a Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) in Edmonton or Calgary because of a vertical gap between the car floor and the station platform. But recently, onboard accessible ramps were installed in one LRV each in Edmonton and Calgary. The ramps are being tested for six months to see how reliable they are. If they work out, the cities will look at installing them in every car so that people using wheelchairs and scooters can more easily use LRVs.

The installation of the ramps was made possible by a grant from Alberta Transportation and Utilities and is one of the initiatives undertaken through the Barrier-Free Transportation Plan.



Accessible ramp on one of Edmonton's LRV's.

The selection and installation of the ramp in Edmonton was overseen by the Edmonton LRV Accessibility Advisory Committee (Consumer/Users Group). The ramps in both cities conform to guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Did you know?

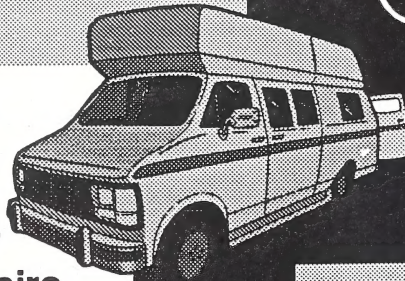
Only 33 per cent of the service providers of local accessible transportation in Alberta reported that they were pooling resources by sharing volunteers, vehicles, vehicle storage, insurance or funding with other municipalities and organizations such as hospitals and nursing homes within their area.

Source: AT&U survey of Transportation for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities in Alberta, May 1995.

Red Arrow offers four departures, daily (seven days a week) on coaches accessible to wheelchairs between Edmonton - Red Deer - Calgary.



Greyhound and Red Arrow Expand Service for People in Wheelchairs



Both of Alberta's two major inter-city coach companies have expanded the service they provide to passengers in wheelchairs.

Now, Greyhound offers wheelchair-accessible service to:
Calgary - Lethbridge
Calgary - Red Deer - Edmonton
Edmonton - Fort McMurray
Edmonton - Grande Prairie
Edmonton - Peace River

You can use the service by calling Greyhound and making a reservation 24 hours in advance.

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

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Breaking Down the Barriers is published by Alberta Transportation and Utilities in an effort to provide timely information about transportation issues of interest to persons with disabilities and related organizations. This publication is distributed to all municipalities, service providers, provincial organizations and consumer groups in Alberta. If we've missed any interested groups, let us know and we will include them on the mailing list.

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